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Proposed conceptual framework on cohesive effect of extrinsic and intrinsic factors on sustainable behaviours

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Abstract

A great deal of evident environmental awareness, concerns and consciousness are pre-cursors to pro-environment behaviour adoption. However, the behaviour has not been sustained, where various symptoms, such as licensing and rebound effects, signify that pro-environmental behaviours are not sustained in different spatial and temporal dimensions. This study aims to expand the knowledge domain by examining the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in sustaining the consistency of attitude-sustainable behaviours relations.

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1. Background

Addressing climate challenges is of the utmost urgency, as it affects human physiological and security needs, ranging from shelter, food, breathing and health. Humans have the responsibility to ensure the healthy state of the environment, either through preservation or preventive approaches (Milfont & Sibley, 2012), in order to prevent any undesirable encircled circumstances that may jeopardise people's overall quality of life. Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of environmental issues, individuals' as-usual behaviours continue regardless of the consequences on the environment, and environmental matters fall by the wayside, as everyone focuses on direct impact issues.

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Apparent indicators claim that environmental issues are not able to impart and sustain a significant share of people's minds, and are always in position to tackle other forceful events to gain mind share of the general public. Bucic, Harris, and Arli (2012), who stated that righteous environmental consideration is placed after utilization needs, is adding additional hurdles to deal with. Therefore, Sheth, Sethia, and Srinivas (2011) instigated that lifestyle-oriented behaviours are possible to change the current state of the environment by imbedding environmental concerns in every part of daily activities, instead of being utilitarian centric. Sustainable behaviours are remedied in response to significantly reduce environmental stress through renewed individual behaviours in all phases, starting from the decision making stage, moving to the usage and consumption stage, and finally, concluding with the disposal stage (Gram-Hanssen, 2012; Evans, 2011).

2. Literature Review

2.1. State of sustainable behaviours

Sustainable behaviours are generally defined as environmental responsibility behaviours in every aspect of an individual's daily activities and grounded on an action's consequences and implication concern basis. Individuals are environmentally responsible in all discourse of action, beyond being single minded on one's own utilitarian satisfaction, and action with minimum environmental impact (Bucic et al., 2012; Huang & Rust, 2011; Sheth et al., 2011; Mont & Plepys, 2008; Perrels, 2008).

Sustainable behaviours engagement, or green lifestyles adoption, can be rationale with several reasons. Consumers' choices of sustainable behaviours can be deliberated to realise their perceived value attached to sustainable behaviour. Salient values associated with sustainable behaviours are multifaceted. Paavola (2001) elaborated further that, under conditions of value pluralism, the more values associated, the higher the tendency for an individual to engage with pro-environmental activities.

2.2. Antecedence of sustainable behaviours

Findings convincingly reveal the distinctive personal characteristics among pro-environmental followers, which are skewed to younger adults, well-educated individuals (Mäkinemi & Vainio, 2013; Chen & Peng, 2012; Teng, Rezai, Mohamed, & Shamsudin, 2012), females (Kalamas, Cleveland, & Laroche, 2013; Bucic et al., 2012; Rezai, Teng, Mohamed, & Shamsudin, 2012; Subhani, Hasan, Osman, & Rudhani, 2012) and high income earners (Bucic et al., 2012; Rezai et al., 2012). Conversely, there are different intensities in the adoption of pro-environmental behaviours. Every individual responds differently to the environment system, and this is attributed to individual idiosyncrasies, such as variety-seeking habits, cognitive maturity and needs (Oliver, 1999). A positive attitude is paramount, and plays an important role in triggering desired behavioural change (Wang & Chen, 2012), consuming both information and perception (Rucker, Tormala, Petty, & Briñol, 2013).

Studies on asset attitude and behaviour are inextricably linked, yet distinct attitude-behaviour gap emerge in pursuing sustainable behaviour. Although consumers mostly have a positive disposition on environmental issues, it does not universally translate into action. Existing research findings have identified salient antecedent elements of sustainable behaviours, and suggest individual and institutional connections communicate between each other, increasing their potency, and greatly amplify people's abilities to consolidate efforts and spread support to outlast sustainable behaviours (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2012; Phipps et al., 2012).

2.3. Way forward in pursuing sustainable behaviours

Urbanization and population growth increase the demand of products and services to meet human needs. The accretions of products and services lead to a higher demand of resources that have a definite quantity. The utilitarian-based demand will impact on the supply of natural resources in complex consequences, specifically the depleting of natural capital, climate changes and massive natural disasters, such as floods, landslides and extreme weather. Furthermore, climate change will afflict and stress the economy and wellbeing of the entire world. Previous research plausibly clarifies that various practices of manufacturing and consumption are paramount for the transformation of

sustainable consumption in protecting the biosphere. Environmental issues are not a uni-dimensional matter, but rather are multifaceted matters and have vast spiral effects.

Human behaviours are fluid and non-uniform. Sustainable behaviours can take place in various forms by an individual, such as the purchase of an energy efficiency light bulb, the reuse of packaging, the use of public transportation, etc. (Barr, Shaw & Coles, 2011). Therefore, sustainable behaviours cannot be approached in a myopic manner, but should be treated in a comprehensive manner, with the consideration of all pro-environmental activities, whether product-centric or activities based.

The attitude-behaviour gap has slowed down efforts to achieve and sustain profound sustainable behaviours (Davies, Lee, & Ahonkhai, 2012; Papaoikonomou, Valverde, & Ryan, 2012; Phipps et al., 2012). The gap attributes to cognitive dissonance. Attitude is a state of emotion towards a target subject, and will consequently steer individual behaviour. Behaviour hinges on attitude. The recognition of the importance of attitude in affecting consumer behaviours and the explanation of the attitude-behaviour dilemma is crucial to: (1) understand what aspect of the attitude is responsible for action and sustainable behaviours, (2) identify factors to sustain the consistency of the relationship between attitude-sustainable behaviours, and (3) offer appropriate support to strive to instil desired attitudes toward sustainable behaviours.

2.4. Research gap and research objectives

The fundamental interaction between humans and the natural environment is interlocking in a reciprocal respect. Environmental quality affects human daily activities and well-being at both the individual and society levels. In turn, human behavioural patterns impact the environmental quality in various ways. Environmental challenges seem to have a blanket effect on all living organisms on earth. Despite environmental consciousness, government pro-activeness, and collective initiatives in nature restoration and sustainable society promotion, market reactions remain lukewarm, and lack encouraging evidence of concomitant from individual consumers in contribution to reduce usage of non-environmental friendly products and services.

Previous research works use a one-dimensional approach when dealing with pro-environmental behaviours, and studies are either product or service centric (e.g., the adoption of an environmental friendly product, green tourism, etc.), or activity-centric (e.g., recycling). Moreover, ecological issues cannot be oversimplified and are reduced to the problem of human behaviours, individual usage and consumption patterns. The phenomenon needs to be contextualised to social practices (Vergragt, Akenji, & Dewick, 2014; Evans, 2011). Weaver (2012) suggested that the conducive environment is with efficient support from the ecosystem, and policy makers and social interactions create opportunities and support sustainable behaviours (Papaoikonomou et al., 2012).

Therefore, this study approaches the sustainable behaviours with a holistic approach, in which sustainable behaviours comprise all pro-environmental practices in daily activities, with twofold of main objectives. Firstly, this study intends to identify and examine the connection and influence of intrinsic factors and social actors on formation of sustainable behaviours' attitude. Subsequently, the study will identify factors to sustain the consistency of attitude-sustainable behaviours relationship. Comprehending the latent factors that drive sustainable behaviour enables various stakeholders to enhance managerial discretion, or latitude of action, coupled with concurrently greater organizational variety for more sustainability, ecologically, culturally, socially, economically and politically.

3. Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses

This study employs a framework derived from sociology theories to explain how social actors interact, provide a conducive environmental and drive the diffusion of sustainable behaviours. Understanding the building blocks of people's dynamic behaviours has profound contribution to the body of knowledge on human and environmental challenges relationships. This study intends to conduct an investigation with an effectuation approach, to understand the precursors for action-based 'unsustainable behavioural discontinuity', and also the key 'catalytic' to sustain behavioural change.

The study seeks to address the gap in the existing literature by the identification of the underlying factors that shape sustainable behaviours through the investigation of motivational factors in influencing the attitude-sustainable

behaviours relationship. Attitude strengths, perceived social roles, and social capital, are examined to determine the respective effect on the attitude and its relationship with sustainable behaviours. The underlying theoretical rationale is discussed in following section and summarise the hypothetical relationship in Figure 1.

3.1. *Theory of Planned Behaviour*

Fundamentally, the Theory of Planned Behaviour establishes the relationship between behaviour, cognition and personal relevancy. The theory claims that the performance of a desired behaviour hinges on the presence of three factors, which are: (i) attitudes, (ii) social norms and (iii) perceived control behaviour.

Attitude is a widely examined variable in the existing literature on sustainable consumption behaviour. Attitude indicates a person's general feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness towards a particular issue (Olson & Kendrick, 2012). A plethora of studies evidenced that attitude is a significant determinant and predictor of pro-environmental behaviours (Zhao, Gao, Wu, Wang & Zhu, 2013; Cho, Thyroff, Rapert, Park & Lee, 2012; Zhang & Lei, 2012; Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2010; Cornelissen, Pandelaere, Warlop & Dewitte, 2008). Drawing from Theory of Planned Behaviour, this study hypothesises presence of positive relationship between attitude and sustainable behaviours. The hypothesis for this relationship is as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between attitude and sustainable behaviours.

3.2. *Attitude Strength*

Attitude is contingent to situational factors, and it is essential to understand the underlying factors that promote and sustain the attitude formed towards sustainable behaviours. In addition, attitude is a cognitive process to decode and attain meaning from stimuli, and reflect an individual's overall positive or negative reactions to an object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Scholars assume that strong attitudes will lead to a high degree of predictability of behaviours. When an individual holds a positive attitude towards an attitude object (recycling), he or she will continuously and repeatedly engage in the activity. This is in contrast to others who have a weaker attitude, and will have a tendency to change their attitude during the presence of other influencing factors.

The question of stability and sustainability of attitude points to diagnose which beliefs influence attitude. The attitude towards an attitude object is formulated based on the persuasion message associated and communicated to an individual. The persuasion message is revolved around bringing up a belief on a set of attributes associated with an attitude object. Therefore, the persuasion effect is to influence an individual to accept a set of beliefs about sustainable behaviours on the premise that the acceptance of the beliefs would generate a positive attitude toward sustainable behaviours (Esses & Maio, 2002; Roskos-Ewoldsen & Fazio, 1997).

Miller and Peterson (2004) claimed that attitude is formulated based on psychological beliefs generated from performing certain behaviours, and the beliefs are varied among individuals with similar behaviours. Juvan and Dolnicar (2014) encored that beliefs are formed and changed throughout the life of an individual, and posit an opportunity window to intervene that aim to stabilise and sustain attitude. The requirements that are served by attitude are the convergence of an individual's characteristics, the domain of the attitude objects and the presence of external environmental factors in which attitudes are formed, manifested, endured and changed (Clary et al., 1998; Herek, 1987; Katz, 1960).

It is essential to understand which beliefs explain the effect of attitude on the behaviour of individuals, and subsequently the consistency between attitude and behaviours. There are four salient beliefs for strength of attitude to be good predictors of behaviours, namely, importance, accessibility, ambivalence and certainty. The elements are distinctively different in terms of cause and effect, and will impact on the information process and behaviour at varying degrees (Miller & Peterson, 2004). The four aforementioned salient beliefs will influence the attitude strength in terms of the information process (importance and accessibility), and it is persistent and resistant to change characteristics (ambivalence and certainty).

(a) Importance. Cognitively, an individual will establish linkage between environmental issues with the actions to be taken, and the importance of attitude takes place in the cognition process (Miller & Peterson, 2004).

Fundamentally, humans will only react to an issue being publicised by believing the issue is relatively personally

important. The personal relevancy of an issue will incite cognitive and emotion engagement. The more important an environmental issue to an individual, the more he or she will be concerned and care about the matter.

- (b) Accessibility. Attitude is an output of information processing that is subject to the speed of the cognitive process and linkage between memories of the attitude object. Accessibility of information is formed by the recency of usage. When environmental matters are often discussed and thought of personally or with family or friends (Miller & Peterson, 2004), these matters occupy top-of-mind, and an individual will take a less amount of time to access these matters from memory. The easier and faster the information is accessed indicates the affectionate closeness of the person with an attitude object (Fazio, Chen, McDonel & Sherman, 1982).
- (c) Ambivalence. Presence of contradiction, ambiguity and inconsistency of information will cause an individual's response to be associated with uncertainty or indecisiveness (Miller & Peterson, 2004). When the state of mind is not univalent, individuals will withdraw from the desired behaviours.
- (d) Certainty. An individual's degree of confidence indicates the certainty of evaluation towards an attitude object. It is believed that the higher the level of confidence in the evaluation process, the higher the attitude certainty of an individual towards a particular matter (environmental issue).

Salient beliefs will enable the differentiation of the underlying relative strength, and enable marketers and policy makers to act upon this to facilitate individuals to fortify stronger attitude towards sustainable behaviour, which is more likely to guide subsequent behaviours (Priester, Nayakankuppam, Fleming, & Godek, 2004; Fazio, Chen, McDonel, & Sherman, 1982). Thus, the hypothesis for the investigation is formulated as follows:

- H2: There is a significant association between salient beliefs [(a) importance (b) accessibility, (c) ambivalence, (d) certainty] and attitude.

3.3. *Social Cognition Theory*

The social cognitive theory renews the understanding on why individuals behave the way they behave, and suggests human agency concepts to address human functionality (Bandura, 2001). Under the human agency concept, the theorist brings forth three different types of agency, namely, direct personal agency, proxy agency and collective agency. It is critical to understand the perceived role of social actors, where social actors are perceived to assume the role of direct personal agency when they are confident with their own self, and this is sufficient to achieve a goal. Centrally, the perceived proxy agency will emerge when individuals believe pro-environmental activities are beyond their capabilities, where there is a weak perceived behaviour control, and the social actors should act to reduce stress on the environment (Bandura, 1991).

Individual action is driven by cognitions attached to the intended action. When an individual is persuaded by the justifications generated by cognitive factors, the desired behaviour will be performed. After completion of the behaviour, the experiences resultant of the specific behaviours will become an emotional reinforcement. The action assumes function as antecedence to the attitude formation. The social cognitive theory depicts that past behaviour will influence future behaviour, where past experiences are either the motivating or demotivating factors, depending on the cognitive effect from past experiences. The present study hypothesises that the relationship between past experience and attitude is as follows:

- H3. Past experience has a significant relationship with attitude.

This study examines the relationship between perceived social actors' roles and attitude towards sustainable behaviours. If individuals believe pro-environmental activities are beyond their capabilities, and there exists weak perceived behaviour control, and social actors should act on behalf of them to reduce stress on the environment, social actors are perceived to be the proxy agency for individuals in engaging sustainable behaviours. On the other hand, individuals often believe they also have a role to play through collaborate effort. Thus, individuals perceived that the social actors are a collaborative agency in the context of sustainable behaviour. Based on the human agency argument, the hypotheses to be tested are as follows:

- H4. Human agency [(a) Direct personal agency, (b) Proxy agency, (c) Collaborative agency] has a significant relationship with attitude.

3.4. Social Exchange Theory

When an individual is situated in an environment, he or she will interact within the interconnected web. In the process of interacting, individuals do not interact on the same sense; they may seek to extend, broaden (bridging), enrich or strengthen (bonding) existing relationships again (Wu, Chuang & Hsu, 2014; Jin, 2013), by capitalize on power and trust that emerge in the exchange process. Power as a set of dedicated relationships in a social network, and as a means to achieve mutual benefits during the exchange process, rather than being perceived as supremacy of authority or superiority in position (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). In addition, trust is equally important during social interaction, which serves as 'lubricant' for a social relationship by reducing any differences or conflicts, and promoting collaboration and relationship during the exchange process (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012).

Therefore, social exchange theory contends that social actors' participations are motivated by the social capitals. Once a social relationship is formed, the social capitals will magnetise the relationship between the social actors. The perceived reciprocal exchange benefits during the exchange process will further enrich the social capital. Thus, the hypotheses to be tested are as follows:

H5a. Social capital moderates the relationship between proxy agency and sustainable behaviours.

H5b. Social capital moderates the relationship between collective agency and sustainable behaviours.

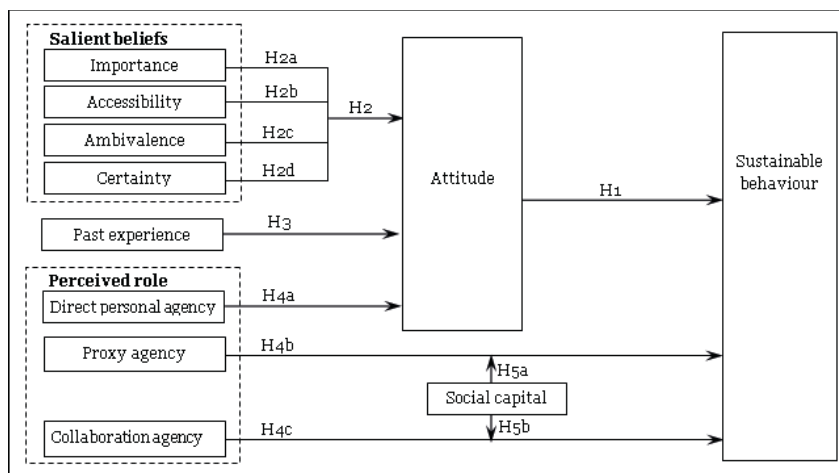


Figure1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

4. Research Methodology

It is projected that seven out of every 10 people in world population will reside in urban areas by 2050. The booming of the human population and cities will have a direct impact to the demand of resources, and waste will increase correspondingly (Johari, Ahmed, Hashim, Alkali & Ramli, 2012). The statistics suggest the need to understand the underlying motivating factors for urbanites to practice sustainable behaviours, and it is more critical now than ever before.

Given the study to establish empirical evidences on the determinants on attitude and sustainable behaviours, the researcher intend this study to be a descriptive and explanatory one. This study will focus on the population aged 18 years old and above residing within urban areas in five geographical regions, with a proportionate sampling representation of the Malaysian population profile in terms of ethnicity, gender and age, through the non-probability sampling approach. Structural equation modelling will be employed to test the series of hypothesised correlations between the independent and dependent variables.

5. Expected Contributions

This study intends to investigate the facilitator in promoting stronger attitude-sustainable behaviours relationship, which marketers can utilise in their marketing strategies to derive best practices for business resonance with consumers, and perform differently in delighting them. Attitude is a cognitive process to decode and attain meaning from stimuli, and reflect individual's overall positive or negative reactions to an object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Cognisant attitude is contingent to situational factors, it is essential to understand the underlying factors that promote and sustain the attitude formed towards sustainable behaviours, and subsequently exert maximal effect on behaviours.

Social connections are perceived to be the new channel for individuals to access products, trade resources and create values. Social networks will amplify and offer a wealth of opportunities for individuals to empower themselves to adopt sustainable behaviours. The connection between individuals and other social actors is inescapable. Therefore, by drawing from the social cognitive theory and the social exchange theory, this study hypothesises that coherence of individual factors and social actors have significant influence on sustainable behaviours.

This study argues that both factors work in tandem, where individual factors drive the internalization of the pro-environmental behaviour, and environmental engagements by social actors can be capitalised as content marketing in an effort to bond with their targeted customers. Information sharing connotes transparency and establishes trust between content owners and users. By examining the contagion effects and the perceived role assumed by social actors, the interplay of social actors and individual factors in facilitating and supporting sustainable behaviours will facilitate policy makers to identify key attributes as missed opportunities, and further strengthen their exploitation strategy. Furthermore, this information can be used as a persuasion tool to engage and convert novice environmental information seekers, fans, and finally, institutionalise the pro-environmental attitude into daily activities.

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